

(24) The Minor Scale

Minor Scales: You have played several pieces in minor keys. In order to learn readily to read pieces in minor keys and to play fluently, it is important to know the minor scales. "For Elise," on page 30, is in the key of A Minor, and below on this page you will find the scale of A Minor.

Natural Form: The Natural Form of the minor scale conforms to the key signature, i.e., contains the sharps or the flats that appear in the key signature. As given below on this page the scale of A Minor, Natural Form, is shown ascending and descending by tetrachords, i.e., groups of four scale tones. These are to be played by fingers 2, 3, 4 and 5, as indicated with the scale.

A. Natural Form

Harmonic Form: In order to secure an effective ending to a piece of music or to a phrase, composers often use a "Leading Tone," i.e., a tone one half-step lower than the keynote. The Harmonic Minor Scale is presented below, ascending and descending by tetrachords. Observe how the Leading Tone is made by sharpening the seventh tone of the scale. Otherwise the Harmonic Minor Scale is the same as the Natural Minor Scale.

B. Harmonic Form

Melodic Form: In ascending minor melodies a pleasing effect is brought about by sharpening the sixth tone of the scale as well as the seventh. This is called the Melodic Form of the Minor Scale. These alterations are not customary in descending passages, which use the Natural Form.

C. Melodic Form

Note: Major and Minor Scales are said to be "Related" when they employ the same key signature. They are called "Parallel" when they start on the same keynote.